



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

For immediate release: April 28, 2004 (04-38)

Contact: Lee Faulconer (360) 902-1804

Jeff Smith (360) 902-1813

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, Washington 98504-2560

Visit our Web site at: agr.wa.gov

Federal block grant boosts Washington growers and communities

OLYMPIA – The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) took \$10 million and turned it into more than \$100 million in new revenue for the state by boosting international sales of agricultural products and helping family farms market their goods locally.

The \$10.1 million grant was part of a \$159.4 million appropriation passed by Congress in 2002 to assist the specialty farming industry. Specialty crops are considered agricultural goods that do not receive federal price supports. Commodity crops, which do receive support, are generally grains and cereals such as wheat, soybeans or corn.

Specialty crops take in the bulk of what a consumer might find in their produce section or a farmers market such as fruits, vegetables and nuts.

The grant funded 85 projects in Washington. Of the funds received, only 1.5 percent was used for administering the grant. The remainder was put directly into programs, said Valoria Loveland, WSDA director.

“This was a terrific opportunity for Washington and the other states,” Loveland said. “It shows what can happen when you let states decide what best suits their needs.”

Washington was the third largest recipient of funds from the federal allocation, behind California and Florida. Loveland said the projects fell within the agency’s mission of public protection and developing and promoting Washington agriculture.

“Much of this money went directly into supporting rural economies throughout Washington,” Loveland said. “Agriculture is the state’s number one job-provider and in many communities it is the principal source of income.”

The money was spent in a variety of ways including:

- Providing technical assistance and equipment to growers that would allow them to produce value-added goods for market.
- Research into ways to develop better opportunity for specialty crop growers.
- Research into improving food safety at farmers markets.

--more--

- Promotional activities for Washington goods both regionally and abroad.

- Projects geared toward protecting the state's water supply while also making it easier for growers to get the water they need for their crops.

The grant also attracted another \$3.95 million in matching funds from industries, communities and organizations.

Among the projects funded:

- Introduction of Golden Delicious USA brand apples to the Canadian market – This project received \$11,000 in grant money and an additional \$19,000 in matching funds from the Washington Apple Commission. It resulted in \$665,000 in revenues directly attributed to the effort.
- Columbia River Wine Expo (2002 and 2003) – The expo is designed to sell Washington wines to foreign markets. It received \$50,000 in grant funds and an additional matching grant of \$137,000. The project resulted in the sales of more than \$2.1 million worth of Washington wine.
- Japan Trade Mission/Hops Reception – The reception introduced Gov. Gary Locke, WSDA Director Loveland and other dignitaries to representatives of the four largest breweries in Japan. The project received \$6,500 in grant funds and an additional \$10,600 in matching funds. It resulted in the sale of \$1 million worth of hops.
- Commercial Kitchen Installation at Burlington Farmers Market – It is difficult for small growers to produce value-added products because of a lack of access to facilities that meet the state's health and safety standard. To overcome this hurdle, the city of Burlington installed a commercial-quality kitchen at its farmers market to allow growers to produce value-added products, such as baked goods, that can be sold to local restaurants or directly to consumers. The project received \$9,000 in grant money and an additional \$3,300 in matching funds.
- US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Inspected Mobile Livestock Processing Unit (Lopez Island) – Small meat producers are often unable to sell their meat by the pound directly to consumers due to a lack of access to USDA-approved processing facilities. The mobile processing unit allows livestock growers to butcher their livestock in an approved facility. This allows farmers to receive as much as \$2,300 per steer as opposed to only \$700 per steer at a livestock auction. The project received \$30,000 in grant money and matching funds of \$120,700.

###